27 November 2013 - As winter weather starts to make its presence felt across the UK, Met Office services help keep railways running efficiently and to time.

The recent 'St Jude's Day' Storm (Oct 28th) shows how we need to prepare for all types of winter weather and the challenges it brings. The storm's high winds had an impact on the rail industry, damaging overhead cabling, rail assets and depositing storm debris on railway lines in its path.

High winds and saturated ground cause impacts as severe as ice on the tracks or snowdrifts during the winter, and accurate forecasts and live data help the rail industry to focus their resources and keep key lines and stations open.

Robin Gisby, Managing Director of Network Rail Operations, said: "The information provided by the Met Office meant we were able to plan and effectively deploy staff ahead of the storm. "Workers were in the right place to clear 250 fallen trees, move debris from tracks and repair several miles of overhead lines across Southern England. This meant that 99 percent of the rail network was open and running to normal timetables just a day after the storm."

This is not the only service that the Met Office provides to the rail industry in the UK. Rail customers benefit from a number of cutting-edge services aimed at keeping railways running efficiently and to time:

- A **Hazard Warning** service which provides a warning alert system to help the rail industry plan for the impact of snow, frost, high winds and heavy rain.
- **Leaf Fall Service -** The Met Office, in partnership with ADAS (Agricultural Development Advisory Service) provides a Leaf-fall forecast and warning service to customers within the rail industry. This helps rail operators identify areas where leaf-fall may cause problems, along their rail routes, allowing operations to be planned accordingly- reducing the delays caused to passengers and improving rail safety.
- **OpenSite Rail** - a new, site-specific service, based on ground surface temperature forecasts, which allows station managers to identify when to treat surfaces such as platforms, car parks and walkways for improved passenger safety.
- **RailIce Forecasts -** Helps to predict when ice may form on the overhead lines and the conductor rail impacting on the train schedules of companies such as the London Underground.
- **Overtopping forecasts** for coastal rail giving a warning of the risk of waves breaching coastal defences.

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